

✓ New House districts head to Jindal

ES ——— - 1 2011

*In waning hours
of session, map OK'd*

TP ——— APR 14 2011

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Capital bureau

BATON ROUGE — After three weeks of wrangling, lawmakers in the final hours of a special redistricting special session finally agreed on a plan to shrink Louisiana's seven congressional districts to six and sent the measure to Gov. Bobby Jindal, who said he will sign it into law.

The plan also needs the approval of the U.S. Justice Department to ensure that it does not dilute minority voting strength.

Senators revised House Bill 6 by Rep. Erich Ponti, R-Baton Rouge, after three hours of debate and approved it 25-13.

See MAP, A-6

Scalise's district would expand to Terrebonne; Richmond's would stretch to East Baton Rouge

MAP, from A-1

The House went along with the Senate changes, 64-35.

The vote on the bill came shortly before 4 p.m. Lawmakers did not go home until the mandatory 6 p.m. deadline, but they failed to approve a compromise committee report on the boundaries of the eight districts for the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Several lawmakers left the session after the congressional plan was approved and were not around to vote on the final version of the BESE measure.

BESE members are up for election this fall, so a bill will have to be filed for the regular session starting April 25 to try to make another stab at drawing those lines.

Lawmakers earlier Wednesday approved a plan to redraw the five Public Service Commission districts; on Monday, they gave final approval to a plan to redraw legislative districts for the fall elections.

After promising to stay out of the redistricting fray, Gov. Bobby Jindal threatened to veto any



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After a special legislative session to realign the state's political boundaries concluded Wednesday, from left, Sen. Neil Riser, R-Columbia; Senate President Joel Chaisson, D-Destrehan; House Speaker Jim Tucker, R-Algiers; and Rep. Erich Ponti, R-Baton Rouge, meet in the Capitol.

HOW THEY VOTED

Now New Orleans area senators voted on House Bill 6 to redraw congressional districts. The measure passed 25-13:

YES: Alario, D-Westwego; Amedee, D-Gonzales; Appel, R-Metairie; Crowe, R-Slidell; Donahue, R-Covington; Martiny, R-Kenner; Nevers, D-Bogalusa; Quinn, R-Metairie;

NO: Chaisson, D-Destrehan; Heitmeier, D-Algiers; Morrell, D-New Orleans; Murray, D-New Orleans; Peterson, D-New Orleans; Willard-Lewis, D-New Orleans

HOW THEY VOTED

How New Orleans area House members voted on a motion to accept Senate amendments to House Bill 6 and send the new congressional map to Gov. Bobby Jindal. The motion passed 64-35:

YES: Abramson, D-New Orleans; Arnold, D-Algiers; Billiot, D-Westwego; Burns, R-Mandeville; Cromer, R-Slidell; Henry, R-Jefferson; Hutter, R-Chalmette; LaBruzzo, R-Metairie; Ligi, R-Metairie; Lopinto, R-Metairie; Lorusso, R-New Orleans; Pearson, R-Slidell; Pugh, R-Ponchatoula; Ritchie, D-Franklinton; Schroder, R-Covington; Simon, R-Abita Springs; Talbot, R-River Ridge; Tucker, R-Algiers; Willmott, R-Kenner

NO: Aubert, D-Vacherie; Badon, D-New Orleans; Bishop, D-New Orleans; Brossett, D-New Orleans; Connick, R-Harvey; Gislair, D-Larose; Henderson, D-Violet; Jackson, D-Marrero; LaFonta, D-New Orleans; Leger, D-New Orleans; Moreno, D-New Orleans; Smith, D-Norco; Stiaes, D-New Orleans; Templet, R-Gretna; Wooton, R-Belle Chasse

NOT VOTING: Hines, R-New Orleans; Monica, R-LaPlace

congressional bill that did not include two north Louisiana districts, with one based in Monroe and the other in Shreveport, as provided in the current congressional alignment.

Ponti's bill creates a district centered in Shreveport, running down the western border of the state and into Acadiana. A second north Louisiana district runs from the Arkansas line to St. Landry Parish on the west and Washington Parish on the east.

Ponti approved the changes made in the Senate by Sen. Neil Riser, R-Columbia. Riser said the bill was a compromise from all districts in the state and one Jindal could sign.

"This is the moment of truth if we want to pass a congressional bill," Riser told senators. "Let's get something that is going to pass." Ponti's bill was the last of several proposals left on redrawing congressional boundaries.

"We are not happy, but this is the best we can do at the end of the day," Ponti told the House.

'A good compromise'

Jindal issued a statement shortly after the session adjourned saying he will sign the congressional redistricting bill when it reaches his desk. "We said all along that we wanted legislators to work together across party lines and across chambers to come to a consensus plan."

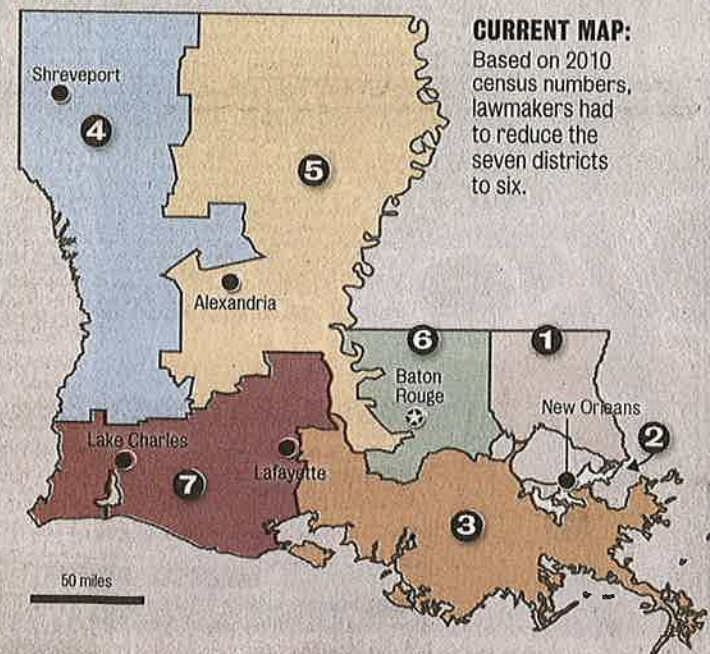
"No one thinks this plan is perfect, but it is a good compromise."

Five of the seven members of the state's congressional delegation fired off a letter to Jindal during the weekend asking him to scrub the session that lawmakers called because there was no consensus on a plan.

They also asked Jindal to call a special session early next year after this fall's legislative elections to take up congressional remapping again. The members of Congress are not up for re-election until the fall of 2012.

At that point, House and Senate leaders vowed to come up with a plan in the waning hours

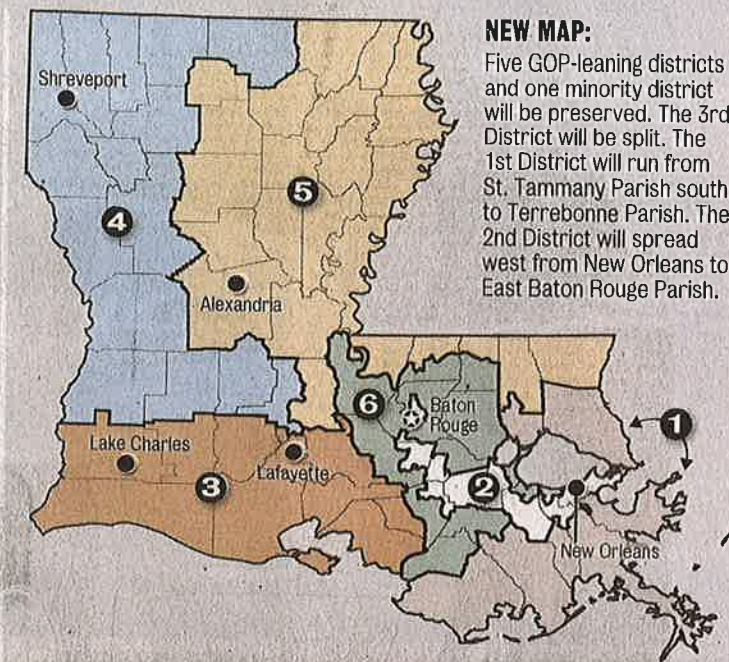
REDRAWING LOUISIANA'S CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS



Source: Louisiana State Legislature

CURRENT MAP:

Based on 2010 census numbers, lawmakers had to reduce the seven districts to six.



NEW MAP:

Five GOP-leaning districts and one minority district will be preserved. The 3rd District will be split. The 1st District will run from St. Tammany Parish south to Terrebonne Parish. The 2nd District will spread west from New Orleans to East Baton Rouge Parish.

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of the special session.

House Speaker Jim Tucker and Senate President Joel Chaisson called the session a success, particularly after the passage of a congressional map that Jindal and five congressmen tried to pressure legislators to punt into 2012.

The two men, at odds during the 3-week session, also agreed that the final congressional map serves state interests, even though some regional pockets — particularly Houma and Thibodaux — are unhappy.

"Other than that," Chaisson said, "this is a very good plan."

Other iterations lose out

Although he joined Tucker in calling the final plans bipartisan, Chaisson acknowledged that he pushed for different orientations of north Louisiana districts, including maps that would have made a Shreveport-based district more competitive for a Democrat. He declined, though, to say that the difference was the Republican governor's insistence on the vertical alignment.

"I don't know, and it really doesn't matter," he said. "The Senate ultimately approved Senator Riser's plan, and I accept that."

Tucker framed the north Louisiana debate less as a partisan exercise and more as an effort to group similar interests. The northeast district includes much of state's row crop farmers and the Mississippi River delta, while the northwest district includes two major military installations: Fort Polk and Barksdale Air Force Base.

"We think it is a good compromise, despite the governor's favor" of it, said Sen. Joe McPherson, D-Woodworth, a frequent Jindal critic.

A previous version of Ponti's bill, with changes supported by Chaisson, had a different configuration of horizontal instead of vertical districts. Riser warned senators that plan probably would not get by Jindal's veto pen.

Ponti's bill put the 1st Congressional District of U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, R-Jefferson, into the coastal parishes of Lafourche,

Terrebonne, St. Bernard and Plaquemines and allowed him to keep his St. Tammany, Jefferson and Lakefront New Orleans base.

But it also carved out more than 25,000 voters in Kenner, now in Scalise's district, and briefly placed them in the 6th District of U.S. Rep. Bill Cassidy, R-Baton Rouge.

Sen. Danny Martiny, R-Kenner, who represents the Kenner-Metairie area in the Legislature, balked and got colleagues to approve an amendment, 20-18, putting all of Kenner back in Scalise's district.

"This takes out the heart of my district in Kenner," Martiny said. "If I go 150 yards, I'll be in Representative Cassidy's district."

Sen. Norby Chabert, R-Houma, said that under Ponti's bill, his Terrebonne-Lafourche district is split between Cassidy and Scalise. "I'm beginning to know what the Christians felt like in the Coliseum, surrounded by lions," he said. "They are carving me up like a Thanksgiving turkey, my people."

2nd minority district rejected

The Senate rejected 23-14 a change to Ponti's bill that would have created a second minority district in the state stretching from East Carroll Parish in the north to St. Landry Parish in Acadiana and to the Baton Rouge area in the south.

Ponti told the House that the Senate changes made the bill better but all parts of the state had to give up territory.

Ponti's bill, as most of those debated during the session would, pit U.S. Reps. Charles Boustany, R-Lafayette, and Jeff Landry, R-New Iberia, in the 3rd District that covers the coastal parishes of southwest Louisiana if they both seek re-election in 2012.

The only minority member of the delegation, 2nd District U.S. Rep. Cedric Richmond, D-New

Orleans, will see his Hurricane Katrina-depleted district, centered in Orleans and Jefferson parishes, expand upriver through the River Parishes and take in about 102,000 residents of East Baton Rouge Parish.

"Nothing jumps out at me and says it will be a problem" winning approval from the Justice Department, said Rep. John Bel Edwards, D-Amite, chairman of the Legislative Democratic Caucus.

Edwards said the plan as drawn probably will help Republicans in the 2012 election cycle.

"That's where the center of gravity is in the Legislature right now," Edwards said that not only have the historically paired Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes been split between Cassidy and Scalise now, but the Florida Parishes "got diced up pretty good," being divided among 5th District of U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, D-Quitman; Cassidy; and Scalise.

Although Richmond and Cassidy will share East Baton Rouge Parish, the Baton Rouge area has been carved into three slices and divided among Cassidy, Alexander and Richmond.

"I guess this is the best that we could hope for," said Rep. John Schroder, R-Covington, pointing out that St. Tammany and Tangipahoa parishes, with similar growth patterns, have been split with St. Tammany in Scalise's district and Tangipahoa split between Scalise and Alexander.

"We are a high-growth area," Schroder said. "It is not good for the north shore to be split up into two congressional districts."

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